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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 002618

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2013
TAGS: [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#) [YM](#) [EH](#) [UN](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE ARMS SMUGGLING FROM YEMEN TO SOMALIA

REF: SANAA 1814

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull, for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (c) Summary/Comment: During his mid-September 2003 visit to Yemen, Dr. John Tambi, from United Nation's Panel of Experts on Somalia (UNPES) stated that UNPES was looking into the possible use of Yemeni airports to smuggle weapons from Yemen to Somalia. Given the prevalence of arms dealing in-country, Post believes that information provided by Tambi is plausible, but has not independently verified the information. End Summary/Comment.

¶2. (c) Dr. John Tambi, a member of the UNPES, told Pol/econoff during a September 14 meeting that UNPES is investigating possible arms smuggling from Yemen to Somalia. Tambi is the civil aviation expert on the panel, other UNPES members include boats and arms experts. Tambi visited Yemen to look into air traffic that may be currently used to smuggle arms from Yemen to Somalia.

¶3. (c) UNPES is investigating the possible involvement of United Arab Emirates-based flights in smuggling arms to Somalia during re-fueling stops at Riyan airport in the southern region of Mukallah. Note: Tambi actually was not certain of the name of the airport, but provided an old airport code that post was able to identify as Riyan. End note. Tambi explained that the re-fueling stops in Yemen seem unnecessary and last longer than the usual time needed for re-fueling, leading UNPES to speculate that such flights may be being loaded with weapons in Riyan. The final destination of these flights are airports in Somalia allegedly controlled by warlords. After unloading their cargo in Somalia, Tambi said the flights return a small airport in Sharja, UAE, without making a re-fueling stop in Yemen.

¶4. (c) Tambi's meetings to discuss UNPES concerns that Yemeni weapons are being smuggled to war-torn Somalia included ROYG officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. According to Tambi, all the ROYG officials he met rejected the notion that Yemeni airports were used in any smuggling activities into Somalia. UNPES plans to continue its investigation and will present any findings to the ROYG. Tambi requested that Embassy Sana'a provide UNPES with any information related to their ongoing investigation.

¶5. (U) Khartoum Minimize Considered.

HULL